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SUBJECT: Political ties mark new parastatal boards

Ref: 07 Kinshasa 185

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Although many senior parastatal executives appointed by President Kabila January 12 were vetted through a public examination process, connections with the ruling coalition or senior political figures were highly influential in appointments of most governing board members. End summary.

¶2. (U) President Kabila appointed nearly 300 senior executives and board members of 37 Congolese parastatal firms January 12 in the mining, energy, transport, financial, industrial, education, communications, public works, scientific research, environmental, agricultural and commercial sectors. Some of the firms are inactive. The appointees, drawn from recommendations by the ministry of public enterprises, included governing board chairmen and members, CEOs, deputy CEOs and finance and technical directors.

¶3. (U) Many of the executives qualified through a new examination-based vetting process championed by Minister Jeannine Mabunda and jointly organized by the government and the Steering Committee for Public Enterprise Reform (Copirep). However, governing board positions were set aside for other appointees, generally associated with parties of the ruling coalition or those with personal connections to Kabila, Prime Minister Gizenga or other senior figures. These include former ministers or deputy ministers, but also a number of new names from Katanga or Maniema, respectively the home provinces of Kabila's parents, or from Gizenga's Bandundu.

¶4. (SBU) Among the prominent appointees: Eugene Serufuli, former RCD governor of North Kivu and head of the paramilitary group TPD (Tous pour la Paix et le Developpement) implicated in the 2004 siege of Bukavu by General Laurent Nkunda and Colonel Jules Mutebusi, as chairman of the electricity parastatal SNEL; Honorius Kisimba Ngoy, a former justice minister notorious for his fraudulent recommendation of a "phantom" candidate for trade minister in Gizenga's first government (reftel), as chairman of the public debt agency Ogedep; Georges Minsay, PALU-nominated justice minister in the first Gizenga government, as chairman of the tourism agency ONT; Enoch Ruberangabo, a South Kivu Muyumulenge politician and former Transitional senator, as chairman of the defunct Kinshasa steelworks Sosider; Telesphore Tsakala, a former deputy labor minister and CEO of the standards regulator OCC, as chairman of the gold mining parastatal Okimo; and Alain Lubamba, former secretary-general of Mobutu Nzanga's Udemo party and deputy foreign minister in the first Gizenga government, as chairman of the gemstone evaluation and certification agency CEEC.

¶5. (SBU) Elected officials appointed to parastatal governing boards will not be obligated to resign, as neither parliamentary work nor board meetings require daily attendance. For example, Come Sekimonyo and Marthe Bashomberwa, named respectively to the boards

of the social security agency INSS and the vocational training institute INPP, will remain National Assembly deputies.

¶6. (SBU) Not all senior executive positions were evidently reserved for those qualifying by examination. Wolf Kimasa, a nephew and informal political adviser of Gizenga, was named deputy CEO of OCC. He has extensive background in private industry. However, former PALU secretary-general Robert Makina, named deputy CEO of INPP, is a historian by training. Martine Cishambo, named finance director of the Office des Routes, is the sister of Kabila's senior political and diplomatic counselor Marcellin Cishambo.

¶7. (SBU) Comment. Non-technical qualifications for board members is nothing new in the corporate world. However, credible reports dating to early 2007 indicate Mabunda, a protege of key Kabila adviser Augustin Katumba, had initially sought to require candidates for all senior parastatal positions -- executives and board members alike -- take the new examination. She came under strong pressure from Katumba and others to back down, but was supported by Gizenga. In the end, the May 2007 decision to create the ministry's vetting system exempted candidates for board positions from the process. End comment.

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